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## Functional Specifics of Mediatext in the System of Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence

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*The publication raises the question of the status and characteristics of a mediatext in the system of language training aimed at development of students' intercultural communicative competence. The author represents the specific characteristics of mediatext as a component of media. The article discloses the classification of media texts, represents the selection criteria for language teaching purposes.*

*Keywords: mediatext, intercultural approach to teaching, intercultural communicative competence, selection of mediatexts, didactical criteria of mediatexts, classification of mediatexts.*

*Research area: 10.00.00 – philology.*

### Introduction

Learning foreign languages is now closely associated with the concept of intercultural communication. Increasing contacts with other cultures have a positive effect on students' motivation to learn foreign languages. Knowledge of one or more foreign languages is considered to be the key to a successful career. But in reality it turns out that in the process of interaction between a specialist and his foreign friends and colleagues a good knowledge of a foreign language is not a guarantee of successful intercultural communication. Even recent graduates of linguistic universities for whom intercultural communication is an essential part of their professional activities, are not immuned

from the "cultural shock", i.e. from the possible rejection of culture, customs, traditions and ethics of the country of the studied language. Hence – the failures, difficulties and, as a consequence, the loss of a possible beneficial effect of business partnership.

At present time the question of overcoming cultural barriers is raised by many researchers of language teaching theory and practices (I.I. Khaleeva, N.D. Galskova, K.N. Hitrik, G.V. Elizarova, S.G. Ter-Minasova, etc.). There exists a specific research area within which there is a development of theoretical and practical understanding of the ways of this problem solving. In Lingvodidactics the sphere of investigations that accounts for such studies

is intercultural approach to teaching foreign languages. The researchers rightly claim the need to develop among foreign language learners some key competencies that allow for successful communication in the conditions of intercultural communication. They are, on the one hand, foreign language communicative competence, which implies a combination of knowledge and skills for successful use of a foreign language in situations of intercultural communication, on the other hand, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which determines the comprehension of the worldview of another ethnical and social community, ability to see the similarities and differences between communicating cultures and apply them in the context of intercultural communication. The fundamental specific feature of intercultural communicative competence is the ability of an individual to rethink his native cultural identity, national and cultural identity, to recognize the facts of his native culture, which previously (before learning a foreign language) were not the subject of reflection and comparison (Tareva, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Intercultural communicative competence is aimed at ensuring an interlocutor with most favorable conditions for conducting a conversation with his partner who represents a different culture. This kind of communication is being actively carried out not only directly, in real life, but also through different media that is in "mediareality". It is difficult to imagine modern human activities without daily processing of information flow, and, most of all information is produced and transmitted through a variety of media (printed media, television, radio, Internet). Nowadays 70% of the world population is involved in creation, processing and transfer of mediatexts; over 90% of the world population is active consumers of media products (Tareva,

2011). Thus, the media help to increase the pace of globalization.

Media production, from the didactic perspective, has long been established as an effective means of formation of media education or media literacy (N.P. Ryzhikh, I.V. Chelisheva, A.A. Novikov). Modern literature differently treats the effects of active intervention of "mediareality" into daily life. At the same time it must be noted that access to mass media of the target language country provides a number of advantages when learning foreign language, and these benefits are substantial. Firstly, when learning a foreign language outside the country where it is a primary means of communication, media texts (printed matters and radio, television texts) are modern sources of written and spoken language of native speakers. Secondly, the media use "full", i.e. literary language norm, which is in the center of teaching a foreign language in a linguistic university. Thirdly, the texts of media faster than dictionaries, grammar references, etc., reflect lexical, grammatical, phonological, etc. changes that occur in the target language. Special attention in the context of learning a foreign language at universities with deeper penetration into foreign language learning is to be paid to foreign language radio texts and teletexts, as with their help, students can comprehend authentic speech, follow the articulation and gesticulation of native speakers. Fourth, of particular interest for foreign language learners are specific cultural media texts, giving an adequate reflection of regional geographic and culturally important aspects of life in the country of the studied language. Finally, depending on the age and interests of foreign language learners it is reasonable to select TV and radio programs in the target language that will promote intrinsic motivation for learning the foreign language. Thus, cognitive and educational value of media texts in the process

of learning a foreign language is clear and indisputable.

At present, mediameans (mainly printed matters) are widely used at foreign language classes as an authentic material for lessons of Speech Practice and for classes devoted to Media Language. It should be noted that the use of media texts is primarily aimed at the development of foreign language communicative competence, in particular, its linguistic component, because while working with media content, students memorize the most common clichés, grammatical structures, etc., in order to then use them in speech and writing.

### **Statement of the problem**

Despite the success achieved in the study of application of media texts, not all their potential features are revealed deeply and thoroughly. In particular, the attention of scientists is outside the study of the role of media for the development of intercultural communicative competence.

The term "mediameans" stands for traditional means, which are used for mass-communication such as movies, television, press, radio. The interpretation of this concept is necessary due to the fact that now in many theoretical papers we can see the tendency of correlation between the concept of "media", denoting a technical device for information representation, and the concept of "mass media", implying technology of relaying information to influence mass audience. In the first case, mediameans is represented by a computer, and in the second – mediameans are represented by TV, cinema, press, etc.

Mediameans are used to broadcast mediatexts that are regarded as key product of mass-media. In the most general form a "mediatext" is defined as "the totality of oral and written texts (printed, audio, video), that make up the content of newspapers, magazines, television and radio broadcasts, Internet-sites of mass-

media publications, various types of advertising, ads, labels and etc. " (Dobrosklonskaya, 2000: 5]. From the perspectives of Psycholinguistics mediatext is defined as a model of a situation or event, reflected through the prism of individual perception of the author, it is a special type of reality, being a product of human information activity, created through a set of texts in mass-media with specific characteristics imposed by media space and media time (Rogozina, 2003).

We can conclude that mediatext redesigns according to special laws of media industry a "parallel" world, reflecting the vision of the world of a native speaker, his stereotypes and norms of behavior, simulating the real situation of communication between native speakers.

From this point of view the special interest is represented by mediatexts that are formed on audiovisual level, i.e. the texts, which are broadcasted by means of TV. The texts of TV-programs, being media products in the studied language, provide distant immersion in the language and cultural environment. With regular use of authentic audiovisual media content foreign language students observe the behavior of native speakers, their cultural peculiarities, fixing difference and similarities with their own culture, which promotes dialogue between cultures. As a result, by the end of a certain period of learning a foreign language with application of media of the country of target language the learners have already got some experience of penetration in the foreign language culture that helps to avoid the phenomenon of "cultural shock" which may take place at the first direct interaction with other lingvoethnic community.

### **Practical aspects: types of mediatexts**

If we regard the produce of foreign-language media from practical point of view, i.e. from the perspective of usage of media content in a

foreign language classroom for the purpose of development of intercultural communicative competence, then the selection of material must be conducted with focus on the interests of foreign language learners and their level of foreign language communicative competence.

The most difficult for audiovisual perception by language learners are News programs, which most fully realize the main function of the media – informative. On the one hand, a high level of repeatability of such mediatexts greatly facilitates the perception and use of the News by the audience that does not belong to the lingvocultural community, for example, students who study the foreign language and foreign-language media culture. On the other hand, due to the cultural specificity of News texts, students may not have the profound extra-linguistic background information needed to understand particular News items. Certain difficulty for perception of News texts may be caused by ideological component of foreign language texts and News media of other cultures. Nevertheless, the News mediatexts are especially valuable because they reflect culturally determined perception and reflection of the vision of the world by a certain cultural community. All that is exposed not only at the level of content, but also at the level of selection and presentation of media information by mass-media in different countries.

Equally important for understanding the vision of the world by a representative of another culture is his interpretation of events. Consequently, that allows active introduction in the educational process the analysis of events, political commentaries, overviews, texts, that represent opinions and assessments. It is the information and analytical materials that represent differences in the perception of realities of social and political life due to specific cultural and ideological context. Different vision of reality is expressed in its turn through different ways of

interpretation of this or that event. Interpretive function of mass communication is implemented by proper media technologies, and by linguistic means, and acquires influential properties.

In terms of potential difficulties for students, information and analytical texts are generally less difficult for understanding than the News texts. This is explained by the fact that, firstly, the information and analytical programs last longer (on average 40 – 60 minutes) than the News (5 – 30 min.), but from the point of view of events, information and analytical texts are less saturated than News. On average, information-analytical program contains 5-10 events, while newscasts – 10-15. In addition, the debatable nature of analytical reports allows students to more easily switch from one topic to another. These and many other features of mediatexts in a foreign language, of course, must be taken into account in the process of development of intercultural communicative competence.

To achieve these goals of particular interest can be the topical broadcasts, which in British media are very aptly named by the term "features", representing the mediatexts on a variety of topics from pop music and sports to high life and high fashion.

In the selection of authentic audiovisual media content should be paid attention to the fact that the topical mediatexts appeal to human interest, focusing the audience at the themes of ever interest (travel, music, hobbies, etc.). In comparison with the News and information and analytical texts, this type of media texts is more focused on impact, which greatly facilitates their perception and understanding by foreign language learners.

Of great interest for foreign language learners are advertising texts. Like any media product, advertising texts represent a form of existence of a social environment, a fragment of national culture. To attract an audience advertising texts

use national-cultural connotation that allows creating in advertising texts national and cultural linguistic image. Advertising texts are designed to encourage potential buyers – representatives of a particular language and culture – to buy a particular product. That is why they are filled with many allusions, associations, etc. Such factors of extralinguistic nature may partially or completely block for a representative of another culture the understanding of the mediatext if he has not been prepared for this. And we cannot ignore the text of advertising, because the ability to fully understand them serves as an evidence of a sufficiently high level of development of intercultural communicative competence.

In addition to the said above, it should be noted that audiovisual mediatexts contribute to the intensification of the learning process, allowing reducing the number of hours required for study of a topic; increases the efficiency of acquisition of non-verbal means of expression specific for native speakers (Pressman, 1988).

#### **Practical aspects: selection of mediatexts**

Recognizing the undeniable role of mediatexts in the structure of system of development of intercultural communicative competence, it should be noted that their use is connected with a number of difficulties; one of the most complicated is the problem of selection of such training materials. Working with media materials, it is necessary to take into account the complexity and a huge variety of mediatexts. Nonsystematic use of media materials can backfire, i.e. reduce motivation and performance of students, in general, and worsen educational performance. To avoid this, the selection and integration of mediatexts in the process of development of intercultural communicative competence should be guided by a number of criteria relating to both objectives of foreign

language education in general and the objectives of the development of intercultural competence in particular.

Selection of specific mediatexts and methods of working with them depends on many factors, primarily on the level of students' language proficiency. Most researchers rightly believe that mediatexts, in particular, newspaper texts as the most popular type of mediatexts used at foreign language lessons, can be used only with learners who are at the intermediate level and higher. A language learner with intermediate level of language proficiency already has a sufficient vocabulary and knowledge in grammar for understanding the text. Usually, at this stage, students work with informational mediatexts, such as notes or reports on political meetings and official events. These mediatexts are full of clichés and set phrases typical for journalistic style, and they lack jargon, slang, and other means of expressive language, which can obscure the students.

With increasing of the level of student's language proficiency it is possible to move on to more complex problematic mediatexts, such as information and analytical programs or essays. In this case, the main criterion for selection is the level of the text difficulty, i.e. mediatexts are selected on the basis of principle "from simple to difficult".

In preparation for working with mediatexts it is also necessary to consider the age of students. The TV program about political system in the country of the target language may be interesting for seniors while freshmen will consider it boring. Students must be excited; the topics discussed in mediatexts must be designed with the aim to not only help to expand their life experiences, but also encourage them to collate their world with the world of native speakers. Selection and organization of mediatexts should be implemented so that students find connections

with their experiences and ideas about their own and "the other" culture. If a teacher chooses a mediatext without consideration of the criterion of "matching students' age", the consequences of using such an authentic media material can be negative, for example, it may cause a sharp rejection of the culture of the country, or "cultural shock" and demotivation of students.

A teacher can prevent this if he finds out the range of his students' interests (for example, through questionnaires) and invite students to consider those issues that affect their peers in the target language country. Students are likely to be concerned with the problems associated with the start of professional life, finding a job in the country of the target language, their peers' leisure, etc. Thus, when reasonable approach to the selection and use of educational media content is implemented a teacher is able to increase the motivation of students and make a significant contribution to the development of their intercultural competence.

As follows from the above, no less important criteria in the selection of mediatexts is the thematic variety of media material, as well as its clear thematic structuring, i.e. availability of topic, subtopics, situation. These criteria are provided by the variety of media texts.

Of particular note are the so-called timeless texts. Basically, these are thematic TV-programs and articles about geography, history, world of animals, etc. Such media materials are relevant for a very long time (the criterion of "relevance of a time parameter"); these subjects almost always trigger students' interest. Depending on the theme of the lesson, a teacher can select informative and interesting material that will be useful in terms of the development of intercultural competence of students. Media products that meet this criterion are produced, for example, by the Channel Discovery (series Travel and Living) and studio National Geographic.

Speaking about mediatexts as texts for training purposes, it is necessary to mention that almost all mediatexts represent different types of pragmatic statements (information on facts, events, evaluation judgments, regulation of relations, etc.), as well as public attitudes, different norms of communication. Most intense in this regard are articles and social programs.

In the selection of authentic mediatexts a teacher should not forget that in addition to the educational function of mediatexts (e.g., movies, programs about Arts, etc.) they are an excellent basis for the development of aesthetic perception of students, which should also become one of the landmarks when searching for authentic media material.

And finally, one of the fundamental criteria in the selection of authentic material, including media material, is quality and functionality of the text appropriate to a certain type of speech activity.

The mentioned above criteria allow to assess the quality of an authentic mediatext with consideration of basic didactic tasks for foreign language teaching accompanied by the process of development of intercultural communicative competence at all the stages of foreign language learning. When selecting media material, not only the quality of the text, but also the number of criteria that the given text matches is taken into consideration. Consequently, the preferred is the text that corresponds to six criteria rather than to three.

To conclude, all the information is summarized in Table I, where the criteria are listed that should be applied at the process of selection of mediatexts, as well as types of mediatexts that match specific criteria.

The Table below represents the correlation between criteria of selection and types of mediatexts.

Table 1

CRITERIA	TYPES OF MEDIATEXTS
1. Adequacy of complexity (from simple to difficult)	From short topical broadcasts on well-known problems to the texts of daily News programs
2. Correspondence to age parameters	Topics and the manner of media materials presentation is varied depending on the age and interests of learners
3. Topical variety (the repertoire of topics correlates with the demands of individuals, with the educational objectives for the certain class of learners)	Provided by all the types of mediatexts
4. Topical structuring (topic, subtopic, situation, vertically arranged context)	Certain topical broadcasts, mainly movies and TV-series)
5. Time relevance	Thematic TV-programs on geography, history, culture, etc.
6. Availability of various types of pragmatic statements (information on facts, events, evaluation judgments, regulation of relations, etc.)	Provided by all the types of mediatexts
7. Social and socio-cultural importance, mediatexts contain civil attitudes, beliefs, positions; norms of the different types of communication	Information and analytical programs, reviews, socially oriented broadcasts
8. Moral challenge	Information and analytical programs and articles, movies, and TV-series
9. Aesthetic parameter	Movies, thematic texts (mediatexts on Arts)
10. Quality and functionality	Mediatexts of everyday dialogic communication (interviews in News programs, thematic programs, information and analytical mediatexts, some texts of advertising)

### Conclusion

Having examined specific features of mediameans, their didactic typology, as well as focusing on the principles of selection of modern mediatexts, it can be concluded that regular use of authentic mediatexts in target language

provides immersion in the language and cultural environment of the studied language being an effective means of accumulation of experience in dealing with foreign-language culture and effective means of developing and improving intercultural communicative competence.

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## **Медиатекст в системе формирования межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции студентов**

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*В публикации ставится вопрос о статусе и особенностях медиатекста в системе иноязычной подготовки студентов вуза с целью формирования у них межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции. Автором предлагается сущностная характеристика медиатекста как одного из компонентов системы медиасредств, приводится классификация медиатекстов, представлены лингводидактически обусловленные критерии отбора медиатекстов.*

*Ключевые слова: медиатекст, межкультурный подход к обучению, межкультурная коммуникативная компетенция, отбор медиатекстов, критерии дидактизированных медиатекстов, классификация медиатекстов.*

*Научная специальность: 10.00.00 – филология.*

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